

SOME
Observations
Upon a PAPER, Call'd, The
REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF THE
Most Honourable the Privy-Council
IN
ENGLAND,
Relating to WOOD's *Half-pence*.

By M. B. Drapier.
AUTHOR of the LETTER, to the
SHOP-KEEPERS, &c.

The Fourth EDITION Corrected.

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1724
Jonathan Swift

To the **NOBILITY** and **GENTRY** of the
Kingdom of **IRELAND**.



HAVING already written *Two* Letters to People of my own Level, and Condition; and having now very pressing Occasion, for writing a *Third*; I thought I could not more properly Address it than to *Your Lordships and VVorships*.

The Occasion is this. **A** Printed Paper was sent to me on the 18th Instant, Entitled, *A REPORT of the COMMITTEE of the LORDS of His MAJESTIES Most Honourable PRIVY-COUNCIL in England, Relating to Mr. WOOD's HALF-PENCE and FARTHING*s. There is no Mention made where the Paper was Printed, but I suppose it to have been in *Dublin*; and I have been told that the Copy did not come over in the *Gazette*, but in the *London Journal*, or some other Print of no Authority or Consequence; and for any thing that Legally appears to the contrary, it may be a Contrivance to *Fright* us, or a *Project* of some *Printer*, who hath a Mind to make a Penny by Publishing something upon a Subject, which now employs all our Thoughts in this Kingdom. Mr. *WOOD* in Publishing this Paper would insinuate to the World, as if the *Committee* had a greater Concern for his Credit and Private Emolument, than for the Honour of the *Privy-Council* and both *Houses of Parliament* Here, and for the Quiet and Welfare of this whole Kingdom: For

it seems intended as a Vindication of Mr. *WOOD* not without several severe Remarks on the Houses of *Lords* and *Commons* of *Ireland*.

The whole is indeed written with the Turn and Air of a Pamphlet, as if it were a Dispute between *WILLIAM WOOD* on the one Part, and the *Lords Justices, Privy-Council* and *Both Houses of Parliament* on the other; the Design of it being to Clear and Vindicate the Injured Reputation of *WILLIAM WOOD*, and to Charge the other Side with casting Rash and Groundless Aspersions upon him.

But if it be really what the Title Imports, Mr. *WOOD* hath treated the *COMMITTEE* with great Rudeness, by Publishing an Act of theirs in so unbecoming a Manner, without their Leave and before it was communicated to the *Government* and *Privy-Council* of *Ireland*, to whom the Committee advised that it should be Transmitted. But with all Deference be it spoken, I do not conceive that a Report of a Committee of the Council of *England* is *Hitherto* a Law in either Kingdom; and until any Point is determined to be a *LAW*, it remains disputable by every Subject.

This (May it please your *Lordships* and *Worships*) may seem a strange Way of discoursing in an *Illiterate Shop-Keeper*. I have endeavoured (although without the Help of Books) to improve that small Portion of Reason which *GOD* hath pleased to give me, and when Reason plainly appears before me, I cannot turn away my Head from it. Thus for Instance, if any Lawyer should tell me that such a Point were Law, from which many Gross Palpable Absurdities must follow, I would not, I could not believe him. If Sir *Edward Cook* should positively assert (which he no

where does, but the direct contrary) that a *Limited Prince*, could by his *Prerogative* oblige his Subjects to take **Half an Ounce of Lead**, stamped with his Image, for **Twenty Shillings in Gold**, I should Swear he was *deceived* or a *Deceiver*, because a Power like that, would leave the whole **Lives and Fortunes** of the People entirely at the Mercy of the Monarch : Yet this, in effect, is what *Wood* hath advanced in some of his Papers, and what suspicious People may possibly apprehend from some Passages in that which is called the *Report*.

That Paper mentions *Such Persons to have been Examined, who were Desirous and Willing to be heard upon that Subject*. I am told, they were Four in all, *Coleby, Brown, Mr. Finley the Banker,* and one more whose Name I know not. The first of these was Tried for Robbing the Treasury in *Ireland*, and although he were acquitted for want of Legal Proof, yet every Person in the Court believed him to be Guilty. The second was Tried for a *Rape*, and stands Recorded in the Votes of the House of Commons, for endeavouring by *Perjury* and *Subornation*, to take away the Life of *John Bingham, Esq*;

But since I have gone so far as to mention particular Persons, it may be some Satisfaction to know who is this *Wood* himself, that has the Honour to have a whole Kingdom at his Mercy, for almost **Two Years** together. I find he is in the Patent Entitled *Esq* ; although he were understood to be only a *Hard Ware-Man*, and so I have been bold to call him in my former Letters; however a *Squire* he is, not only by Vertue of his Patent, but by having been a Collector in *Shropshire*, where pretending to have been Robbed, and
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Suing the County, he was Cast, and for the Infamy of the Fact lost his Employment.

I have heard another Story of this Squire *Wood* from a very Honourable Lady, That one *Hamilton* told her. He (*Hamilton*) was sent for Six Years ago by Sir *Iaac Newton* to try the Coy-nage of Four Men, who then Solicited a Patent for Coyning Half-pence for *Ireland*; their Names were *Wood*, *Coster*, *Elliston*, and *Parker*. *Parker* made the fairest Offer, and *Wood* the worst, for his Coyn were Three Half-pence in a Pound less Value than the other. By which it is plain with what Intentions he Solicited this Patent, but not so plain how he obtained it.

It is alledged in the said Paper, called the *Report*, that upon repeated Orders from a Secretary of State, for sending over such Papers and Witnesses, as should be thought proper to Support the Objections made against the Patent (by Both Houses of Parliament) the Lord Lieutenant Represented the great Difficulty he found himself in to comply with these Orders. That none of the Principal Members of Both Houses, who were in the King's Service or Council, would take upon them to Advise how any Matèrial Person or Papers might be sent over on this Occasion, &c. And this is often Repeated and Represented as A Proceeding that seems very Extraordinary, and that in a Matter which had raised so great a CLAMOUR in *Ireland*, No one Person could be prevailed upon to come over from *Ireland* in Support of the United Sense of both Houses of Parliament in *Ireland*, especially that the chief Difficulty should arise from a General Apprehension of a Miscarriage, in an Enquiry before his Majesty, or in a Proceeding by due Course of Law, in a Case where Both Houses of Parliament had de-
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clared themselves so fully convinced, and satisfied upon Evidence, and Examinations taken in the most Solemn Manner.

How shall I, a poor Ignorant Shop-Keeper, utterly unskill'd in Law, be able to answer so weighty an Objection. I will try what can be done by plain Reason, unassisted by Art, Cunning or Eloquence.

In my humble Opinion, the Committee of Council, hath already prejudg'd the whole Case, by calling the United Sense of both Houses of Parliament in Ireland an **UNIVERSAL CLAMOUR**. Here the Addresses of the Lords and Commons of Ireland against a Ruinous Destructive Project of an *Obscure, Single Undertaker*, is called a **CLAMOUR**. I desire to know how such a Stile would be Resented in England from a Committee of Council there to a Parliament, and how many *Impeachments* would follow upon it. But supposing the Appellation to be proper, I never heard of a wise Minister who despised the **UNIVERSAL CLAMOUR** of a People, and if that **CLAMOUR** can be Quieted by disappointing the Fraudulent Practice of a single Person, the Purchase is not Exorbitant.

But in Answer to this Objection. First it is manifest, that if this Coynage had been in Ireland, with such Limitations as have been formerly specified in other Patents, and Granted to Persons of this Kingdom, or even of England, able to give sufficient Security, few or no Inconveniencies could have happened, which might not have been immediately remedied. As to Mr. Knox's Patent mentioned in the Report, Security was given into the Exchequer, that the Patentee should at any Time receive his Half-pence back, and pay Gold

or Silver in Exchange for them. And Ir. Moore (to whom I suppose that Patent was made over) was in 1694 forced to leave off Coining, before the End of that Year, by the great Crowds of People continually offering to return his Coynage upon him. In 1698 he Coyned again, and was forced to give over for the same Reason. This entirely alters the Case; for there is no such Condition in WOOD's Patent, which Condition was worth a Hundred Times all other Limitations whatsoever.

Put the Case, that the two Houses of *Lords and Commons* of *England*, and the *PRIVY COUNCIL* there should Address his Majesty to recall a Patent, from whence they apprehend the most ruinous Consequences to the whole Kingdom: And to make it Stronger if possible, that the whole Nation almost to a Man, should there-upon Discover the most *Disfmal Apprehensions* (as Mr. Wood styles them) would his Majesty debate half an Hour what he had to do? Would any Minister dare advise him against Recalling such a Patent? Or would the Matter be referred to the *Privy Council* or to *Westminster Hall*, the two Houses of *Parliament* *Plantiffs* and *William Wood* *Defendant*? And is there even the smallest Difference between the two Cases?

Were not the People of *Ireland* born as *Free* as those of *England*? How have they forfeited their *Freedom*? Is not their *Parliament* as fair a *Representative* of the *People* as that of *England*? And hath not their *Privy-Council* as great or a greater Share in the Administration of *Publick* Affairs? Are they not *Subjects* of the same *King*? Does not the same *Sun* shine over them? And have they not the same *God* for their *Protector*? Am I a
Free;

Free-Man in England, and do I become a *Slave* in six Hours by crossing the **Channel**? No Wonder then, if the boldest Persons were cautious to interpose in a **Matter** already determined by the whole Voice of the Nation, or to presume to represent the Representatives of the Kingdom, and were justly apprehensive of meeting such a Treatment as they would deserve at the next Session. It would seem very extraordinary if an Inferiour Court in *England* should take a **Matter** out of the Hands of the High Court of Parliament, during a Prorogation, and decide it against the Opinion of Both Houses.

It happens however, that, although no Persons were so bold, as to go over as Evidences, to prove the Truth of the Objections made against this Patent by the *High Court of Parliament* here, yet these Objections stand Good, notwithstanding the Answers made by *Wood* and his **COUNCIL**.

The *Report* says, that upon an *Assay* made of the *Fineness, Weight and Value of this Copper*, it exceeded in every Article. This is possible enough in the Pieces upon which the *Assay* was made; but *Wood* must have failed very much in Point of Dexterity, if he had not taken Care to provide a sufficient Quantity of such Half-pence as would bear the Tryal; which he was well able to do, although they were taken out of several Parcels. Since it is now Plain, that the Byats of Favour hath been wholly on his Side.

But what need is there of disputing, when we have positive Demonstration of *Wood's* Fraudulent Practices in this Point. I have seen a large Quantity of these Half-pence weighed by a very Skilful Person, which were of Four Different Kinds, Three of them considerably under weight.

I have now before me an exact Computation of the Difference of Weight between these Four Sorts, by which it appears that the Fourth Sort, or the Lightest, differs from the First to a Degree, that, in the Coyneage of Three hundred and sixty Tuns of Copper, the Patentee will be a Gainer only, by that Difference of Twenty four thousand Four hundred and Ninety four Pounds, and in the whole, the Publick will be a Loser of Eighty two thousand One hundred and Sixty eight Pounds, Sixteen Shillings, even supposing the Metal in Point of Goodness to answer *Wood's* Contract and the *Assay* that hath been made ; which it infallibly doth not. For this Point hath likewise been enquired into by very Experienced Men, who, upon several Tryals in many of these Half pence, have found them to be at least one Fourth Part below the Real Value (not including the *Raps* or *Counterfeits* that he or his Accomplices have already made of *his own Coyn*, and scattered about) Now the Coyneage of Three hundred and Sixty Tun of Copper Coynd by the Weight of the Fourth or Lightest Sort of his Half-pence will amount to One hundred Twenty two thousand Four hundred Eighty eight Pounds Sixteen Shillings, and if we Subtract a Fourth Part of the Real Value by the *Base Mixture* in the Metal, we must add to the Publick Loss one Fourth Part to be subtracted from the Intrinsic Value of the Copper, which in Three hundred and Sixty Tuns amounts to Ten thousand and Eighty Pounds, and this added to the former Sum of Eighty two thousand One hundred Sixty eight Pounds, Sixteen Shillings will make in all, Ninety two thousand Two hundred Forty eight Pounds Loss to the Publick; besides the *Raps*
or

or Counterfeits that he may at any time hereafter think fit to Coyn. Nor do I know whether he reckons the **DROSS** Exclusive or Inclusive with his Three hundred and Sixty Tun of Copper; which however will make a considerable Difference in the Account.

You will here please to observe, that the Profit allowed to *Wood* by the Patent is Twelve-pence out of every Pound of Copper valued at 1 s. 6 d. whereof 5 d. only is allowed for Coynage of a Pound Weight for the *English* Half-pence, and this Difference is almost 35 per Cent. which is double to the highest Exchange of Money, even under all the Additional Pressurers, and Obstructions to Trade, that this unhappy Kingdom lies at present. This one Circumstance in the Coynage of Three hundred and sixty Tun of Copper makes a Difference of Twenty Seven thousand Seven hundred and Twenty Pounds between *English* and *Irish* Half-pence, even allowing those of *Wood* to be all of the heaviest Sort.

It is likewise to be considered, that for every Half-penny in a Pound Weight exceeding the Number directed by the Patent, *Wood* will be a Gainer in the Coynage of Three hundred and sixty Tun of Copper, Sixteen hundred and eighty Pounds Profit more than the Patent allows him; Out of which he may afford to make his *Comptrollers* EASY upon that Article.

As to what is alledged, that *these* Half-pence far exceed the like Coynage for Ireland in the Reigns of his Majesties Predecessors: There cannot well be a more exceptionable Way of Arguing: Although the Fact were true, which however is altogether mistaken; not by any Fault in the Committee, but by the Fraud and Imposition of *Wood*, who certainly

tainly produced the worst Patterns he could find, such as were coyned in small Numbers by *Permissions to Private Men*, as *Butchers Half-pence*, *Black-Dogs* and the Like, or perhaps the Small *St. Patrick's* Coyn which passes for a Farthing, or at best some of the smallest *Raps* of the latest Kind. For I have now by me some Half pence coyned in the Year 1680 by vertue of the Patent granted to my *Lord Dartmouth*, which was renewed to *Knox*, and they are heavier by a ninth Part than those of *Woods*, and in much better Metal. And the great *St. Patrick's* Half-penny is yet larger than either.

But what is all this to the present Debate? If under the various Exigences of former Times, by Wars, Rebellions, and Insurrections, the Kings of *England* were sometimes forced to pay their Armies here with mixt or base Money, God forbid that the Necessities of turbulent Times should be a Precedent for Times of Peace, and Order, and Settlement.

In the Patent abovementioned granted to *Lord Dartmouth* in the Reign of *King Charles 2d.* and renewed to *Knox*, the Securities given into the *Exchequer*, obliging the *Patentee* to receive his Money back upon every Demand, were an effectual Remedy against all Inconveniencies: And the Copper was coyned in our own Kingdom, so that we were in no Danger to purchase it with the Loss of all our Silver and Gold carried over to another, nor to be at the Trouble of going to *England* for the Redressing of any Abuse.

That the Kings of *England* have exercised their Prerogative of Coyning Copper for *Ireland* and for *England* is not the present Question: But (to speak in the Style of the Report) it would seem

a little Extraordinary, supposing a King should think fit to exercise his *Prerogative* by Coyning Copper in *Ireland*, to be current in *England*, without referring it to his Officers in that Kingdom to be informed whether the Grant was reasonable, and whether the People desir'd it or no, and without Regard to the Addresses of his Parliament against it, God forbid that so mean a Man as I should meddle with the King's *Prerogative*; But I have heard very wise Men say that the King's *Prerogative* is bounded and limited by the *Good and Welfare* of his *People*. I desire to know, whether it is not understood and avowed that the *Good of Ireland* was intended by this Patent. But *Ireland* is not consulted at all in the Matter, and as soon as *Ireland* is inform'd of it, they Declare against it; the *Two Houses of Parliament* and the *Privy-Council* addresses his Majesty upon the *Mischiefs* apprehended by such a Patent. The *Privy Council* in *England* takes the Matter out of the *PARLIAMENT's* Cognizance; the *Good of the Kingdom* is dropt, and it is now determined that Mr. Wood shall have the Power of Ruining a whole Nation for his private Advantage.

I never can suppose that such Patents as these were originally granted with the View of being a *JOB* for the Interest of a Particular Person, to the Damage of the Publick: Whatever Profit must arise to the Patentee was surely meant at best but as a Secondary Motive, and since somebody must be a Gainer, the Choice of the Person was made either by Favour, or *SOMETHING ELSE*, or by the Pretence of Merit and Honesty. This Argument returns so often and strongly into my Head, that I cannot forbear frequently repeating it. Surely his Majesty, when he consented to the Passing of this Patent, *Conceived* he was doing

an Act of Grace to his Most Loyal Subjects of Ireland, without any Regard to Mr. Wood, farther than as an *Instrument*. But the People of Ireland think this Patent (intended **NO DOUBT** for their Good) to be a most intolerable Grievance, and therefore Mr. Wood can never succeed, without an open Avowal that his Profit is preferred not only before the *Interests*; but the very *Safety* and *Being* of a great Kingdom; and a Kingdom distinguished for its Loyalty, perhaps above all others upon Earth. Not turned from its Duty by the *Jurisdiction of the House of Lords*, abolish'd at a Stroke, by the *Hardships of the Act of Navigation newly enforced*: By all possible *Obstructions in Trade*, and by a Hundred other Instances, enough to fill this Paper. Nor was there ever among us the least Attempt towards an *Insurrection* in Favour of the **PRETENDER**. Therefore whatever Justice a **FREE PEOPLE** can Claim we have at least an *Equal Title* to it with our Brethren in *England*, and whatever Grace a good Prince can bestow on the most *Loyal Subjects*, we have Reason to expect it; Neither hath this Kingdom any way deserved to be Sacrificed to one *Single, Rapacious, Obscure, Ignominious PROJECTOR*.

Among other *Clauses* mentioned in this *Patent*, to shew how Advantageous it is to *Ireland*, there is one which seems to be of a *Singular Nature*; that the *Patentee* shall be obliged, during his Term, to pay *Eight hundred Pounds a Year to the Crown, and Two hundred Pounds a Year to the Comptroller*. I have heard indeed that the King's Council do always consider, in the Passing of a Patent, whether it will be of Advantage to the Crown, but I have likewise heard that it is at the same Time considered

considered whether the Passing of it may be injurious to any other Persons or Bodys Politick: However, although the Attorney and Solicitor be Servants to the King, and therefore bound to consult his Majesty's Interest, yet I am under some Doubt whether Eight hundred Pound a Year to the Crown would be equivalent to the Ruin of a Kingdom. It would be far better for us to have paid Eight thousand Pounds a Year into his Majesties Coffers, in the midst of all our Taxes (which, in Proportion, are greater in this Kingdom than ever they were in *England*, (even during the War) than purchase such an Addition to the Revenue at the Price of our **UTTER UNDOING**.

But here it is plain that Fourteen thousand Pound are to be paid by *Wood*, only as a *Small Circumstantial Charge* for the Purchase of his Patent, what are his other *Visible Costs* I know not, and what were his **LATENT**, is variously conjectured. But he must be surely a Man of some wonderful Merit. Hath he saved any other Kingdom at his own Expence, to give him a Title of Re-imburfing himself by the *Destruction* of ours? Hath he discovered the *Longitude* or the *Universal Medicine*? No. But he hath found out the *Philosopher's Stone* after a new Manner, by *De-basing* of Copper, and resolving to force it upon us for Gold.

When the Two Houses represented to his Majesty, that this Patent to *WOOD* was obtain'd in a *Clandestine Manner*, surely the Committee could not think the Parliament would insinuate that it had not passed in the common Forms, and run through every Office where Fees and Perquisites were due. They knew very well that Persons in

in Places were no **Enemies** to **Grants**, and that the **Officers** of the **Crown** could not be kept in the **Dark**. But the *Late Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* affirmed it was a **Secret** to him (and who will doubt of his **VERACITY**, especially when he **Swore** to a **Person of Quality** ; from whom I had it, that *Ireland* should never be troubled with these **Half-pence**.) It was a **Secret** to the **People of Ireland**, who were to be the *Only Sufferers*, and those who best knew the **State** of the **Kingdom** and were most able to advise in such an **Affair**, were wholly **Strangers** to it.

It is allowed by the *Report* that this **Patent** was passed without the **Knowledge** of the **Chief Governour** or **Officers** of *Ireland* : And it is there elaborately shewn, that *Former Patents have passed in the same Manner*, and are good in **Law**. I shall not dispute the **Legality** of **Patents**, but am ready to suppose it in his **Majesty's Power** to grant a **Patent** for **Stamping Round Bits of Copper** to every **Subject** he hath. Therefore to lay aside the **Point of Law**, I would only put the **Question**, whether in *Reason* and *Justice* it would not have been proper in an **Affair** upon which the *Welfare of a Kingdom depends*, that the said **Kingdom** should have received timely **Notice**, and the **Matter** not be carried on between the *Patentee* and the *Officers of the CROWN*, who were to be the only **Gainers** by it.

The **Parliament**, who in **Matters** of this **Nature** are the most able and **Faithful Councillors**, did represent this **Grant** to be *destructive of Trade*, and *Dangerous to the Properties of the People*, to which the only **Answer** is, That *the King hath a Prerogative to make such a Grant*.

It

It is asserted that in the Patent to *Knox*, His Half-pence, are made and declared the Current Coyne of the Kingdom, whereas in this to *Wood*, there is only a Power given to issue them to such as will receive them. The Authors of the Report, I think, do not affirm that the King can by Law Declare any thing to be Current Money by his Letters Patents. I dare say they will not affirm it, and if *Knox's* Patent contained in it Powers contrary to Law, why is it mentioned as a Precedent in his Majesties *Just and Merciful* Reign: But although that Clause be not in *Wood's* Patent, yet possibly there are others, the Legality whereof may be equally doubted, and particularly that, whereby a Power is given to *William Wood* to break into Houses in search of any Coyne made in Imitation of His. This may perhaps be affirmed to be Illegal and Dangerous to the Liberty of the Subject. Yet this is a Precedent taken from *Knox's* Patent, where the same Power is granted, and is a Strong Instance what Uses may be sometimes made of *Precedents*.

But although before the Passing of this Patent, it was not thought necessary to consult any Persons of this Kingdom, or make the least Enquiry whether Copper Money were wanted among us; Yet now at length, when the Matter is over, when the Patent hath long passed, when *Wood* hath already Coyned Seventeen Thousand Pounds, and hath his Tools and Impliments prepared to Coyn Six times as much more; the Committee hath been pleased to make this Affair the Subject of Enquiry. *Wood* is permitted to produce his Evidences, which consist as I have already observed, of Four in Number, whereof *Coleby Brown* and Mr. *Finley* the Banker are Three. And these were to prove that

that Copper Money was extreemly wanted in *Ireland*. The first had been out of the Kingdom almost Twenty Years, from the Time that he was tryed for *Robbing the Treasury*, and therefore his *Knowledge and Credibility* are equal. The Second may be allowed a more *Knowing Witness*, because I think it is not above a Year since the House of Commons ordered the Attorney General to Prosecute him, for endeavouring to take away the Life of John Bingham, Esq; Member of Parliament by Perjury and Subornation. He asserted that he was forced to Tally with his Labourers for want of Small Money (which hath often been practised in England by Sir Ambrose Crawly and others) but those who knew him better give a different Reason, (if there be any Truth at all in the Fact) that he was forced to Tally with his Labourers not for want of Half-pence, but of more Substantial Money, which is highly possible, because the Race of Suborners, Forgers, Perjurors and Ravishers, are usually People of no Fortune, or of those who have Run it out by their Vices and Profuseness. Mr. Finley the Third Witness honestly confessed, that he was Ignorant whether *Ireland* wanted Copper Money or no; but all his Intention was to buy a certain Quantity from Wood at a large Discount, and Sell them as well as he could, by which he hoped to get Two or Three Thousand Pounds for himself.

But suppose there were not one Single Half-penny of Copper Coyn in this whole Kingdom (which Mr. Wood seems to intend, unless we will come to his Terms, as appears by employing his Emissaries to buy up our Old ones at a Penny in the Shilling more than they Pass for) It could not be any Real Evil to us, although it might be some inconvenience. We have many Sorts of Small

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Silver

Silver Coyns, to which they are Strangers in *England* such as the *French Three-pences, Four-pence half-pennies* and *Eight-pence half-pennies*, the *Scotch Five-pences* and *Ten-pences*, besides their *Twenty-pences*, and *Three and Four-pences*, by all which we are able to make Change to a Half penny of almost any Piece of Gold or Silver, and if we are driven to *Brown's Expedient* of a *Sealed Card*, with the little Gold or Silver still remaining, It will I suppose, be somewhat better than to have nothing left but *Wood's Adulterated Copper*, which he is neither obliged by his *Patent*, nor hitherto able by his *Estate* to make good.

The Report farther tells us, it must be admitted that *Letters Patents* under the great Seal of Great-Britain for Coyning Copper Money for Ireland are Legal and Obligatory, a Just and Reasonable Exercise of his Majesties Royal Prerogative, and in no manner Derogatory or Invasive of ANY Liberty or Privilege of his Subjects of Ireland. First we desire to know, why his Majesty's Prerogative might not have been as well asserted, by Passing this Patent in Ireland, and Subjecting the several Conditions of the Contract to the Inspection of those who are only concerned, as was formerly done in the only Precedents for Patents granted for Coyning for this Kingdom, since the mixt Money in Queen Elizabeth's Time, during the Difficulties of a Rebellion: Whereas now upon the greatest Imposition that can possibly be practised, we must go to England with our Complaints, where it hath been for some Time the Fashion to think and to affirm that *We cannot be too hardly used*. Again the Report says, that *Such Patents are Obligatory*. After long thinking, I am not able to find out what can possibly be meant here by this Word *Obligatory*.
This

This Patent of *Wood* neither *Obligeth* him to Utter his Coyn, nor us to take it, or if it did the Latter, it would be far Void, because no Patent can *Oblige* the Subject against Law, unless an illegal Patent passed in *One* Kingdom can Bind *Another* and not it self.

Lastly, it is added, that *Such Patents are in no Manner Derogatory or Invasive of any Liberty or Privilege of the King's Subjects of Ireland*. If this Proposition be true, as it is here laid down, without any Limitation either expressed or Implied, it must follow that a King of *England* may at any Time Coyn Copper Money for *Ireland*, and oblige his Subjects here to take a Piece of Copper under the Value of Half a Farthing for Half a Crown, as was practised by the late King *James*, and even without that Arbitrary Prince's Excuse, from the Necessity and Exigences of his Affairs. If this be in no Manner *Derogatory nor Evasive of any Liberties or Privileges of the Subjects of Ireland*, it ought to have been expressed what our *Liberties* and *Privileges* are, and whether we have any at all, for in specifying the Word *IRELAND*, instead of saying *His Majesty's Subjects*, it would seem to insinuate that we are not upon the same Foot with our Fellow Subjects in *England*; which however the Practice may have been, I hope will never be directly asserted, for I do not understand that *Poining's Act* deprived us of our *Liberty*, but only changed the Manner of passing Laws here (which however was a Power most indirectly obtained) by leaving the Negative to the Two Houses of Parliament. But, waving all Controversies relating to the Legislature, no Person, I believe, was ever yet so bold as to affirm that the People of *Ireland* have not the same Title to the Benefits

of the **COMMON LAW**, with the rest of his Majesty's Subjects, and therefore whatever Liberties or Privileges the People of *England* enjoy by **COMMON LAW**, we of *Ireland* have the same; so that in my humble Opinion, the Word *Ireland* standing in that Proposition, was, in the mildest Interpretation, *A Lapse of the Pen*.

The *Report* farther asserts, that *the Precedents are many, wherein Cases of great Importance to Ireland, and that immediately affected the Interests of that Kingdom, Warrants, Orders, and Directions by the Authority of the King and his Predecessors, have been issued under the Royal Sign Manual, without any previous Reference or Advice of his Majesty's Officers of Ireland, which have always had their due Force, and have been punctually comply'd with, and Obeyed*. It may be so, and I am heartily sorry for it, because it may prove an Eternal Source of Discontent. However among all these *Precedents* there is not one of a Patent for Coyn-
ing Money for *Ireland*.

There is nothing hath perplexed me more than this Doctrine of **PRECEDENTS**. If a Jobb is to be done, and upon searching Records you find it hath been done before, there will not want a Lawyer to Justify the Legality of it, by producing his *Precedents*, without ever considering the Motives and Circumstances that first introduced them, the Necessity or Turbulence or Iniquity of Times, the Corruptions of Ministers, or the Arbitrary Disposition of the Prince then Reigning. And I have been told by Persons eminent in the Law, that the worst Actions which Humane Nature is capable of, may be justified by the same Doctrine. How the first *Precedents* began of Determining Cases of the Highest Importance to *Ireland*,

land, and immediately affecting it's Interest, without any previous Reference or Advice to the King's Officers here, may soon be accounted for. Before this Kingdom was entirely Reduced by the Submission of *Tyrone* in the last Year of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign, there was a Period of Four Hundred Years, which was a various Scene of War and Peace between the *English* Pale and the *Irish* Natives, and the Government of that Part of this Island which lay in the *English* Hands, was, in many Things under the immediate Administration of the King. Silver and Copper were often Coyned here among us, and once at least upon great Necessity, a mixt or base Metal was sent from *England*. The Reign of King *James* 1st. was employed in settling the Kingdom after *Tyrone's* Rebellion, and this Nation flourished extreamly till the Time of the Massacre 1641. In that difficult Juncture of Affairs, the Nobility and Gentry Coyned their own Plate here in *Dublin*.

By all that I can discover, the Copper Coyn of *Ireland* for Three Hundred Years past consisted of small Pence and Half-pence, which particular Men had Licence to Coyn, and were current only within certain Towns and Districts, according to the personal Credit of the Owner who uttered them, and was bound to receive them again, whereof I have seen many Sorts; neither have I heard of any Patent granted for Coyning Copper for *Ireland* till the Reign of King *Charles* II. which was in the Year 1680. to *George Leg* Lord *Dartmouth*, and Renewed by King *James* II. in the first Year of his Reign to *John Knox*. Both Patents were passed in *Ireland*, and in both the Patentees were obliged to receive their Coyn again to any that would offer them Twenty Shillings
of

of it, for which they were obliged to pay Gold or Silver.

The Patents both of Lord *Dartmouth* and *Knox* were Referred to the Attorney General here, and a Report made accordingly, and both, as I have already said, were passed in this Kingdom. *Knox* had only a Patent for the Remainder of the Term Granted to Lord *Dartmouth*, the Patent expired in 1701. and upon a Petition by *Roger Moor* to have it Renewed, the Matter was referred hither, and upon the Report of the Attorney and Solicitor, that it was not for his Majesty's Service or the Interest of the Nation to have it Renewed, it was Rejected by King *William*. It should therefore seem very *Extraordinary* that a Patent for Coining Copper Half-pence, intended and professed for the Good of the Kingdom, should be passed without once consulting that Kingdom, for the Good of which it is declared to be intended, and this upon the Application of a *Poor, Private, Obscure Mechanick*; and a Patent of such a Nature, that as soon as ever the Kingdom is informed of it's being passed, they cry out Unanimously against it as *Ruinous* and *Destructive*. The Representative of the Nation in Parliament, and the Privy-Council Address the King to have it Recall'd; yet the Patentee, such a one as I have described, shall prevail to have this Patent approved, and his private Interest shall weigh down the Application of a whole Kingdom. *St. Paul* says, *All things are Lawful, but all things are not Expedient*. We are Answered that this Patent is *Lawful*, but is it *Expedient*? We Read that the High Priest said *It was expedient that one Man should Die for the People*; And this was a most wicked Proposition. But that a *Whole Nation* should *Die for one Man*, was never heard of before. But

But because much Weight is laid on the *Precedents* of other Patents, for *Coyning Copper for Ireland*, I will set this Matter in as clear a Light as I can. Whoever hath Read the *Report*, will be apt to think, that a Dozen *Precedents* at least could be produced of Copper Coyned for *Ireland*, by Vertue of Patents passed in *England*, and that the Coynage was there too, whereas I am confident, there cannot be one *Precedent* shewn of a Patent passed in *England* for *Coyning Copper for Ireland*, for above an Hundred Years past, and if there were any before, it must be in Times of Confusion, The only *Patents* I could ever hear of, are those already mentioned to Lord *Dartmouth* and *Knox*; the Former in 1680. and the Latter in 1685. Now let us compare these Patents with that granted to *Wood*. First, The Patent to *Knox*, which was under the same Conditions as that granted to Lord *Dartmouth*, was Passed in *Ireland*, the Government and the *Attorney* and *Solicitor General* making Report that it would be useful to this Kingdom.

The Patent was Passed with the Advice of the *King's Council* here; The *Patentee* was obliged to receive his Coyn from those who thought themselves surcharged, and to give *Gold* and *Silver* for it; Lastly, The *Patentee* was to pay only 16*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* per Ann. to the Crown. Then, as to the Execution of that Patent. First, I find the Halfpence were *Milled*, which, as it is of great Use to prevent Counterfeits (and therefore industriously avoided by *Wood*) so it was an Addition to the Charge of Coynage. And for the Weight
and

and Goodness of the Metal ; I have several Half-pence now by me, many of which weigh a Ninth Part more than those coyned by Wood, and bear the Fire and Hammer a great deal better ; and which is no Trifle, the Impression Fairer and Deeper. I grant indeed, that many of the latter Coynage yield in Weight to some of Wood's by a *Fraud* natural to such *Patentees* ; but not so immediately after the Grant, and before the Coyn grew Current: For in this Circumstance Mr. Wood must serve for a *Precedent* in *Future Times*.

Let us now examine this new Patent granted to William Wood. It Passed upon very false Suggestions of his own, and of a few Confederates: It passed in *England*, without the least Reference hither. It passed unknown to the very Lord Lieutenant, then in *England*. Wood is empowered to Coyn one hundred and Eight thousand Pounds, and all the Officers in the Kingdom (Civil and Military) are commanded in the Report to Countenance and assist him. Knox had only Power to utter what we would take, and was obliged to receive his Coyn back again at our Demand, and to enter into Security for so doing. Wood's Half pence are not Milled, and therefore more easily Counterfeited by himself as well as by others: Wood pays a Thousand Pounds per Ann. for 14 Years Knox paid only 16 l. 13 s. 4 d. per Ann. for 21 Years.

It was the Report that set me the Example of making a Comparison between those two Patents, wherein the Committee was grossly misled by the false Representation of William Wood, as it was by another Assertion, that Seven hundred Tun of Copper were coyned during the 21 Years of Lord Dartmouth's and Knox's Patents. Such a Quantity

tity of Copper at the Rate of 2 s. 8 d. per Pound would amount to about an Hundred and Ninety thousand Pounds, which was very near as much as the Current Cash of the Kingdom in those Days; yet, during that Period, *Ireland* was never known to have too much Copper Coyn, and for several Years there was no coyning at all : Besides I am assured, that upon enquiring into the Custom-House Books, all the Copper imported into the Kingdom, from 1683 to 1692. which includes 8 Years of the 21 (besides one Year allowed for the Troubles) did not exceed 47 Tuns; and we cannot suppose even that small Quantity to have been wholly apply'd to Coynage : So that I believe there was never any Comparison more unluckily made or so destructive of the Design for which it was produced.

The Psalmist reckons it an Effect of God's Anger, when *he selleth his People for Nought, and taketh no Money for them.* That we have greatly offended God by the Wickedness of our Lives is not to be disputed : But our King we have not offended in Word or Deed ; And although he be God's Vice-gerent upon Earth, he will not punish us for any Offences, except those which we shall commit against his Legal Authority, his Sacred Person (which God preserve) or the Laws of the Land.

The Report is very profuse in Arguments, that *Ireland* is in great want of Copper Money. Who were the *Witnesses* to prove it, hath been shewn already, but in the Name of God, Who are to be *Judges* ? Does not the Nation best know its own Wants ? Both Houses of Parliament, the Privy-Council and the whole Body of the People declare the Contrary ; Or let the Wants be what they

they will. We desire they may not be supply'd by Mr. *Wood*. We know our own Wants but too well ; they are *Many* and *Grievous* to be born, but quite of another Kind. Let *England* be satisfied ; As things go, they will in a short Time have all our Gold and Silver, and may keep their Adulterate Copper at Home, for we are determined not to purchase it with our Manufactures, which *Wood* hath Graciously offered to accept. Our *Wants* are not so bad by a Hundredth Part as the Method he hath taken to supply them. He hath already tryed his Faculty in *New-England*, and I hope he will meet at least with an **EQUAL RECEPTION** here ; what *That* was I leave to Publick Intelligence. I am supposing a Wild Case, that if there should be any Person already receiving a Monstrous Pension out of this Kingdom, who was Instrumental in Procuring this *Patent*, they have either not well consulted their own Interests, or *Wood* must put more Dross into his Copper and still diminish its Weight.

Upon *Wood's* Complaint that the Officers of the King's Revenue here had already given Orders to all the Inferiour Officers not to receive any of his Coyn, the *Report* says, That *this cannot but be looked upon as a very extraordinary Proceeding*, and being contrary to the Powers given in the *Patent*, the *Committee* say, They cannot advise his Majesty to give Directions to the Officers of the Revenue here, not to receive or utter any of the said Coyn as has been desired in the Addresses of Both Houses, but on the contrary, they think it both Just and Reasonable that the King should immediately give Orders to the Commissioners of the Revenue &c. to revoke all Orders, &c. that may have been given by them to hinder or obstruct the receiving

receiving the said Coyn. And accordingly, we are told, such Orders are arrived. Now this was a Cast of Wood's Politicks; for his Information was wholly False and Groundless, which he knew very well; and that the Commissioners of the Revenue here were all, except one, sent us from England, and love their Employments too well to have taken such a Step: But Wood was wise enough to consider, that such Orders of Revocation would be an open Declaration of the Crown in his Favour, would put the Government here under a Difficulty, would make a Noise, and possibly create some Terror in the Poor People of Ireland. And one great Point he hath gained, that although any Orders of Revocation will be needless, yet a new Order is to be sent, and perhaps already here, to the Commissioners of the Revenue, and all the King's Officers in Ireland, that Wood's Half pence be suffered and permitted, without any Let, Suit, Trouble, Molestation or Denial of any of the King's Officers or Ministers whatsoever, to Pass and be received as CURRENT MONEY by such as shall be Willing to receive them. In this Order there is no Exception, and therefore, as far as I can Judge, it includes all Officers both Civil and Military, from the Lord High Chancellor to a Justice of Peace, and from the General to an Ensign: So that Wood's Project is not likely to fail for want of Managers enough. For my own Part, as things stand, I have but little Regret to find my self out of the Number, and therefore I shall continue in all Humility to Exhort and Warn my Fellow-Subjects never to Receive or Utter this Coyn, which will Reduce the Kingdom to Beggary by much Quicker and larger Steps than have Hitherto been taken.

But it is needless to argue any longer. The Matter is come to an Issue. His Majesty Pursuant to the Law, hath left the Field open between Wood and the Kingdom of Ireland. Wood hath Liberty to Offer his Coyn, and We have Law, Reason, Liberty and Necessity to refuse it. A knavish Jocky may Ride an old Foundred Jade about the Market, but none are obliged to Buy it. I hope the Words Voluntary and Willing to receive it will be understood, and applied in their true Natural Meaning, As commonly understood by PROTESTANTS. For if a Fierce Captain comes to my Shop to Buy Six Yards of Scarlet Cloth followed by a Porter laden with a Sack of Wood's Coyn upon his Shoulders, if we are agreed about the Price, and my

Scarlet

Scarlet lves ready cut upon the Counter, if he then gives me the *Word of Command*, to receive my Money in *Wood's Coyn*, and calls me a *Disaffected Jacobite Dog* for refusing it (although I am as Loyal a Subject as himself, and *Wish-out Hire*) and thereupon Seizes my Cloth, leaving me the Price in this Odious Copper, and bids me take my Remedy: In this Case, I shall hardly be brought to think that I am *Lett to my own Will*. I shall therefore on such Occasions, first order the Porter aforesaid to go off with his Pack, and then see the Money in *Silver and Gold* in my Possession before I Cut or Measure my Cloth. But if a *Common Soldier* drinks his Pot first, and then offers Payment in *Wood's Half-pence*, the *Landlady* may be under some Difficulty; For if she complains to his *Captain* or *Ensign*, they are likewise OFFICERS, included in this General Order for encouraging these Half-pence to pass as **CURRENT MONEY**. If she goes to a Justice of *Peace*, he is also an *Officer*, to whom this General Order is directed. I do therefore Advise her to follow my Practice, which I have already begun, and be payed for her Goods before she parts with them. However I should have been content, for some Reasons, that the *Military Gentlemen* had been excepted by Name, because I have heard it said, that their Discipline is best confined within their own District.

His Majesty in the Conclusion of his Answer to the Address of the House of Lords against *Wood's Coyn*, is pleased to say that *He will do every Thing in his Power for the Satisfaction of his People*. It should seem therefore, that the Recalling the Patent is not to be understood as a Thing *In his Power*. But however since the Law does not oblige us to receive this Coyn, and consequently the Patent leaves it to our Voluntary Choice, there is nothing remaining to preserve us from Ruin but that the whole Kingdom should continue in a firm determinate Resolution never to Receive or Utter this **FATAL Coyn**: After which, let the Officers to whom these Orders are directed, (I would willingly except the *Military*) come with their *Exhortations*, their *Arguments* and their *Eloquence*, to persuade us to find our Interest in our Undoing. Let *Wood* and his *Accomplices* Travel about the Country with *Cart-Loads* of their *Ware*, and see who will take it off their Hands, there will be no Fear of his being Robbed, for a *Highway-Man* would scorn to touch it.

I am only in Pain how the *Commissioners* of the *Revenue* will proceed in this Juncture; because I am told they are obliged by Act of Parliament to take nothing but *Gold* and *Silver* in Payment for His Majesty's *Customs*, and I think they cannot Justly offer this Coynage of Mr. *Wood* to others, unless they will be content to receive it themselves.

The Sum of the whole is this. The *Committee* Advises the King to send immediate Orders to all his Officers here, that *Wood's Coyn* be Suffered and Permitted without any Let, Suit, Trouble, &c. to pass and be received as **CURRENT MONEY** by such as shall be **WILLING** to receive the same. It is probable, that the first **WILLING** Receivers may be those who Must Receive it whether they will or no, at least under the Penalty of losing an Office. But the Landed *Undependent Men*, the *Merchants*, the *Shop Keepers* and Bulk of the People, I hope, and am almost confident, will never receive it. What must the Consequence be? The Owners will Sell it for as much as they can get. *Wood's Halfpence* will come to be offered for Six a Penny (yet then he will be a sufficient Gainer) and the *Necessary Receivers* will be Losers of Two Thirds in their Salaries or Pay.

This puts me in Mind of a Passage I was told many Years ago in England. At a Quarter-Sessions in *Leicester*, the *Judges* had wisely decreed, to take off a Half-penny in a Quart from the Price of Ale. One of them, who came in after the thing was determined, being inform'd of what had passed, said thus: *Gentlemen*; You have made an Order, that Ale should be sold in our Country for Three Half pence a Quart: I desire you will now make another to appoint who must Drink it, for **BY G—— I WILL NOT.**

I must beg leave to caution your *Lordships* and *Worships* in one Particular. *Wood* hath graciously promised to Load us at present only with Fourty thousand Pounds of his Coyn, till the *Exigences* of the Kingdom require the Rest. I intreat you will never suffer Mr. *Wood* to be a Judge of your **EXIGENCES**. While there is one Piece of Silver or Gold remaining in the Kingdom he will call it an **EXIGENCY**, he will double his present *Quantum* by Stealth as soon as he can, and will

will have the Remainder still to the Good. He will Pour his own Raps and Counterfietts upon us: *France* and *Holland* will do the same; nor will our own Coyners at Home be behind them: To confirm which, I have now in my Pocket a *Rap* or Counterfiet Half-penny in imitation of His, but so ill performed, that in my Conscience I believe it is not of his Coyning.

I must now desire your *Lordships* and *Worships* that you will give great Allowance for this long undigested Paper, I find my self to have gone into several Repetitions, which were the Effects of Haste, while new Thoughts fell in to add something to what I had said before, I think I may affirm that I have fully answered every Paragraph in the *Report*, which although it be not unartfully drawn, and is perfectly in the Spirit of a Pleader who can find the most plausible Topicks in behalf of his Client, yet there was no great Skill required to detect the many Mistakes contained in it, which however are by no means to be charged upon the Right Honourable Committee, but upon the most False Impudent and Fraudulent Representations of *Wood* and his Accomplices. I desire one Particular may dwell upon your Minds, although I have mention'd it more than once; That after all the Weight layed upon *Precedents* there is not one produced in the whole *Report*, of a Patent for Coyning Copper in *England* to Pass in *Ireland*, and only two Patents referred to (for indeed there were no more) which were both passed in *Ireland*, by References to the King's Council here, both less Advantageous to the Coyner than this of *Wood*, and in both *Securities* given to receive the Coyn at every Call, and give Gold and Silver in Lieu of it. This Demonstrates the most Flagrant Falshood and Impudence

of *Wood*, by which he would endeavour to make the Right Honourable Committee his Instruments (for his own Illegal and Exorbitant Gain,) to Ruin a Kingdom which hath deserved quite different Treatment.

I am very Sensible that such a Work as I have undertaken might have worthily employed a much better Pen. But when a House is attempted to be Robbed it often happens that the weakest in the Family runs first to stop the Door. All the Assistance I had were some Informations from an *Eminent Person*, whereof I am afraid I have Spoiled a Few by endeavouring to make them of a Piece with my own Productions, and the Rest I was not able to manage: I was in the Case of *David* who could not move in the Armour of *Saul*, and therefore rather chuse to attack this *Uncircumcised Philistine* (*Wood* I mean) with a Sling and a Stone: And I may say for *Wood's* Honour as well as my own, that he Resembles *Goliath* in many Circumstances, very applicable to the present Purpose; For *Goliath* had a *Helmet of Brass* upon his Head, and he was Armed with a Coat of Mail, and the weight of the Coat was Five thousand Sheakles of Brass, and had Graves of Brass upon his Legs, and a Target of Brass between his Sholders. In short he was like *Mr. Wood* all over Brass; And he defied the Armies of the Living God. *Goliath's* Condition of Combat were likewise the same with those of *Wood*. If he prevail against us then shall we be his Servants: But if it happens that I prevail over him I Renounce the other part of the Condition, he shall never be a Servant of Mine, for I do not think him fit to be Trusted in any *Honest* Man's Shop.

I will conclude with my Humble Desire and Request which I made in my Second Letter; That
your

your *Lordships* and *Worships* would please to Order a *Declaration* to be drawn up expressing, in the strongest **T**erms, your firm Resolutions never to receive or utter any of *Wood's Half-pence* or Farthings, and forbidding your Tenants to receive them. That the said *Declaration* may be Signed by as many Persons as possible who have **E**states in this Kingdom, and be sent **D**own to your several Tenants aforesaid.

And if the **D**read of *Wood's Half-pence* should continue till next *Quarter Sessions* (which I hope it will not) the Gentlemen of every County will then have a fair Opportunity of Declaring against them with **U**nanimity and **Z**eal.

I am with the greatest Respect,

(May it please your Lordships and Worships)

Your most Dutiful

Aug. 25:
1724.

and Obedient Servant,

M. B.

